

## 神的智慧（二、两种智慧）——哥林多前书1:19-21

### *The Wisdom of God, Part 2, Two Kinds of Wisdom — 1 Corinthians 1:19-21*

#### **Introduction and Outline**

- Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-31

#### **1 Corinthians 1:17-31 (NASB1995)**

<sup>19</sup> For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
And the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.”

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to know* God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

- No one with basic humility would dare to speak presumptuously about the wisdom of God—unless God Himself reveals it to us. And indeed, God has revealed His wisdom to us.

**Romans 11:33** *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!”*

- God wants us to learn His wisdom, because only then can we live the kind of life He desires for us to live.
- Title: The Wisdom of God, Part 2, Two Kinds of Wisdom (vv.19-21)
  1. Two Kinds of Wisdom (background)
  2. Result of Wisdom (v.19)
  3. Rhetorical Questioning of Wisdom(v.20)
  4. Redemptive Power of Wisdom (v.21)

#### **Two Kinds of Wisdom (background)**

- **Proverbs 26:12** says, *“Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”* A fool who recognizes his own foolishness can turn to God's Word and seek wisdom from Him, by which they can gain true wisdom. But for someone who hasn't gained true wisdom to think he's already wise, he will not humbly seek wisdom from God. That's why such a person is completely without hope.
- *"Through common grace, people can gain a certain amount of wisdom about how to live in the world. There are unbelievers who know how to manage their money well, respond positively to difficult situations, and even respond to tragedy with strength and dignity. However, **it is the Lord who created***

*the world, and only He can give true insight into the way the world works, because His wisdom is seen in the light of eternity.*" — GotQuestions.org

- A person may have the wisdom to fix a car, but he can't fix his life. Only by the wisdom God gives through Scripture leading to eternal life can a person, by faith, learn to fix his life. These are two completely different kinds of wisdom.
- The difference between the two kinds of wisdom: **1. Different sources** (from man vs. from God); **2. Different scopes** (one kind of wisdom has a limited, earthly perspective to solve practical matters in this life; the other applies an eternal perspective to deal with the most important issues of life—those concerning true joy in both this life and the life to come); **3. Different moral qualities** (When people think of wisdom, they often think of skill or ability; but in the Bible, wisdom has more to do with character. In James 3:13–18, the contrast between the two kinds of wisdom lies entirely in their character traits!)
- The character issues displayed by the Corinthian church were the result of pursuing the wrong kind of wisdom!
- This passage speaks not only of two kinds of wisdom—but also of **two kinds of people**: “those who are perishing” and “those who are being saved” (v.18)!

### **Result of Wisdom (v.19)**

- “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside”: the ultimate result accomplished by God's wisdom is the destruction of human wisdom. Isaiah 29:14 says this is a “wondrously marvelous” thing.
- “For it is written” refers to Isaiah 29:14. In the original context, “the wise” and “the clever” refer to the false prophets and false teachers among the Jews at that time. These were seen by the public as the wisest men. People would go to them for counsel, assuming they had wisdom from God—able to help them solve problems and guide them in God's way. But they were false prophets. They professed to preach wisdom from God, but in reality, what they preached was entirely their own human wisdom and cleverness. They had no real interest at all in what God's Word really means. They never truly understood it. Yet, they pretended to be wise and taught others their kind of wisdom.

【Consider】 What does this have to do with the church in Corinth? Obviously, it's because the Corinthians had the exact same problem!

【Further insight】 The ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's words is found in the cross of Jesus Christ! God's final way of destroying all false wisdom is through the cross. One of the greatest accomplishments of the cross is to utterly crush all human wisdom—because the cross makes it clear that no one is saved by even the slightest bit of his own wisdom or power.

【Gospel】 All that a sinner needs to do is to believe, with the **simplest faith**, the **simplest historical fact** that Jesus **died and rose again to pay for all his sins**. Just by believing such a simple message, a sinner **immediately has eternal life**!

【Reality】 Anyone who wants to boast in their own wisdom and power won't want to believe such a simple message, for it leaves no room for him to boast! But for those who **simply believe** (Isaiah

29:19 refers to them as “**the humble**” and “**the poor**”), God truly grants full and eternal forgiveness through the cross. So yes, it is absolutely a “wondrously marvelous” thing.

【Reality】 What the Corinthians lacked the most is this humble and poor spirit. They thought they had become very rich. (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:8)

### **Rhetorical Questioning of Wisdom(v.20)**

- "Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?": These words carry a tone of strong rebuke. Paul is rebuking the readers for overlooking such a simple and foundational question. In the original context, “the wise man” refers to Greek philosophers, “the scribe” refers to Jewish scholars of the Scripture, “the debater” is less precisely defined, but it's not hard to imagine their characteristics—skilled in argument, persuasive in speech, proud of their rhetorical ability.

【Supplement】 One of the key traits of false teachers in the Bible is that they love to argue. Beware of this “debater spirit”!

**1 Timothy 6:4** “...he is conceited and understands nothing; but he **has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words**, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions.”

【Question】 Where are all these people? Not in God’s kingdom, obviously. Of all the world’s so-called intellectual elites, how many would even care to come to a real church?

- “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?": The word *foolish* here means *worthless, of no use*. All the world’s so-called intellectual elites, with all their combined wisdom, contribute absolutely nothing to the work of building God’s kingdom.

【Question】 How about all the advancements of society, like modern technology? Isn’t that a remarkable accomplishment of humanity? How can we say that God has made the wisdom of this world foolish and useless?

【Answer】 God’s kingdom is a spiritual kingdom; and these external improvements offer absolutely no help to the human soul. Human souls are still, at their core, lovers of sin—proud and selfish. This has never changed throughout the ages. High technology has not eradicated sin; it has only given sinners more power to do evil.

【Fact】 Anyone who is honest enough will admit that there is a **beast of sin** inside himself. If it were to be let loose, it would cause unimaginable damage. This is the most real and most serious problem faced by all humanity.

【Conclusion】 **Where are all the great men of the world now?** If they were full of wisdom and power, let them now stand up and solve this problem for us! The truth is, **their wisdom has not solved the problem of sin at all.**

【Application】 Are you still admiring those admired by the world? Do you still want to be like them—longing for the respect and admiration of mankind?

## Redemptive Power of Wisdom (v.21)

- "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God": This is the greatest irony of worldly wisdom—it makes people unable even to know God.

【Example】 Scientists have the wisdom to see stars billions of light-years away, yet they can't see the omnipresent God who is right in front of them. Artists have the wisdom to create the finest works of art, yet they can't see that they themselves are masterpieces made by God. Politicians have the wisdom to rule mass populations, yet they can't see that the entire universe is ruled by God. False religions have the wisdom to invent all kinds of strange myths and legends, yet they can't see the glorious light of God's truth and holiness...

- "God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe": to save them from sin — from the bondage of sin, the power of sin, the corruption of sin, the curse of sin, and the punishment of sin — things which human wisdom has absolutely no power to change in the slightest bit. Yet through the wisdom of the cross, God has completely saved those who believe. What incredible power!
- "This is the wisdom of God": Using the simplest message (the cross) to solve the toughest problem which the best of human wisdom could never solve.

## Conclusive Application

1. Perhaps some have not yet believed in the Lord because they've made the gospel too complicated! "The problem of human sin is so complex—how could it possibly be resolved by a simple cross? There must be something I haven't figured out yet. I'll believe once I figure it all out." **The good news is: the gospel message really is that simple!** This is the wisdom of God—using the simplest message to destroy the highest wisdom of man. So, believe this simple message now, or one day you yourself will be destroyed by God.
2. If you are already saved and desire to be part of a church characterized by loving unity, then this is your take-away from today: **don't take any extra-biblical wisdom or experience too seriously!** All worldly wisdom, life experience, and even ministry experience—unless the Bible clearly teaches it—should not be held too highly. Especially when others disagree with your wisdom, you must all the more be ready to throw it away! **Never insist that you are right and others must agree with you; otherwise, you will certainly bring the same spiritual problems of the Corinthian church into your own.**